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L E T T E R

OF THE

FRENCH BISHOPS

RESIDING IN ENGLAND,

TO THE LATE

POPE PIUS VI.

AND THE

ANSWER OF HIS HOLINESS,

TOGETHER WITH THE

LATIN ORIGINALS.

Dublin:

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1800.

THE
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

A VERSION of the following letters is presented to the public with full confidence that the performance will be favourably received by the votaries of religion, and the lovers of literature. The truth is, the letters are of a most interesting nature. The first was addressed by several French Bishops residing in this country, to Pope Pius VI. in confinement in the convent of the Carthusians near Florence; it contains the strongest expressions of esteem, attachment, and sympathy, and is certainly a beautiful and a masterly performance. It is written with spirit, taste and elegance. The answer of his Holiness is a composition of singular merit. The choice of topics, the variety and beauty of illustration, the piety and the elevation of the sentiments, the force and dignity of the style, the paternal tenderness and affection which it breathes, render this epistle a performance worthy of the rank, ability and sanctity of the illustrious Author, and equal to any Latin composition of the kind, which christian antiquity presents to our view.

In performing my duty as a translator, I have endeavoured to comply with the directions of Cicero on this subject. I count not servilely the words and syllables of my author; I weigh his meaning, and force, and labour to transfuse his sense and spirit into the language in which I write. Such are my ideas concerning the nature of translation; how far I have succeeded in giving a just and pleasing representation of the following letters, the public will not hesitate to decide.

St. Edmund's College,
Old Hall Green, Dec. 14, 1799.

EPISTOLA

QUORUNDAM GALLIÆ EPISCOPORUM

AD

SUMMUM PONTIFICEM PIUM SEXTUM.

Beatissime Pater,

UT primum hoc nefando schismate, quod apud nos invexit illa recens everſionum lues tam altaribus ipsis quàm foliis regum et imperiis infensissima, dilagratam se sensit Ecclesia Gallicana, non stetit in ambiguo, quin protinùs ad eum, cui donatum est confirmare fratres suos, fidenter confugeret. In paterno Vestræ Sanctitatis sinu curas et angores deposuimus, cum indubitata spe, tot inter dolorum et difficultatum causas, nobis inde non minùs remedii quàm solatii et levaminis adfuturum.

Ab iis fundata sancti Evangelii præconibus, quos primi Beati Petri successores in Galliam misere, nostra illa Francorum Ecclesia per suam constantem cum sede Apostolicâ communionem usque nunc inconcussa permansit, et eo felici nexu, qui quidem est genuinæ Catholicæ unitatis tessera, fidei integritatem servavit illibatam. Unde autem suum robur, hinc etiam sibi recuperandæ salutis non degener expectatio. Pro certo scilicet habebat, sedatâ semel hâc ingenti tempestate gregibus æquè ac pastoribus calamitosâ, ex eodem unitatis centro emerſurum esse quemdam divinæ faustitatis radium, qui non modo singula recrearet, sed etiam ampliori virtutum et honoris luce omnia quæque collustraret.

In spem tanti beneficii versabatur indefinenter ante oculos nostros immensa illa, nec interrupta unquam, antecessorum vestrorum series, qui mystici navigii clavum cum gloriâ tenuere. Alii quidem
eloquentiâ

L E T T E R
OF
SEVERAL FRENCH BISHOPS RESIDING IN
ENGLAND,
TO POPE PIUS THE VI.

MOST HOLY FATHER,

THE Gallican Church had no sooner observed her children divided and torn by an execrable schism, the offspring of a destructive phrenzy, which directs its efforts at once against the altar of the Deity and the throne of the monarch, than she hastened, with confidence, to solicit his assistance, who has been entrusted with the task of inspiring his dejected brethren. Into the paternal bosom of your Holiness did we pour our cares and solicitude, animated with the liveliest assurance, that, amidst the sorrows and perplexities, which we experienced, we should find a remedy in our disasters, and comfort in our distresses.

Founded by those preachers of the gospel, whom the first successors of St. Peter sent into Gaul, our Church of France, by her constant attachment to the Apostolic See, had remained firm and unshaken to the period in question; and by this fortunate connection, which is the genuine mark of catholicity, she had preserved un sullied the integrity of faith. Under the present circumstances, she had entertained a well grounded hope, that the original source of her strength would prove the ultimate cause of her safety. She was well assured that, when this furious tempest, equally destructive to the pastors and the flock, should once subside, a ray of light would in some propitious hour, dart from the centre of unity, and that not only individuals would feel its cheering influence, but that the distinguished lustre of virtue and of honour would be diffused over the whole body of the faithful.

Our hopes of enjoying this signal benefit were enlivened by the prospect of that immense and uninterrupted series of your predecessors, who have guided with so much glory the vessel of the Church. Some of them have been distinguished by

eloquentiâ et ingenio, alii eruditione, alii sanctitate et diverso virtutum genere pro varietate temporum claruerunt. At Romam justo et leni imperio gubernasse, legibus temperasse, beneficiis devinxisse, tum veteribus tum novis artium monumentis decorasse, quod est magni principis; at Ecclesiam doctrinâ simul et pietate et prudentiâ et imperterritâ animi magnitudine, inter difficillimas rerum angustias fulcire, solari et regere, quod est optimi pastoris: hæc, Beatissime pater, hæc vestra Laus est, hoc pontificatûs vestri decus et ornamentum.

Mæstas solabamur his mentes cogitationibus, cum sceleratum illud fulmen, quod nos de sedibus disjecit præcipientes, capiti vestro pariter impendens, ictu repetito tonat, ardet, irruit, et ipsi Ecclesiæ extrema minuitur, si fas esset ut portæ inferi adversus eam prævalerent.

Cum temporibus antiquis Italiam Barbari devastarunt, et arcem Christiani orbis Romam subegere, sacris saltem Pontificibus pepercit effera eorum barbaries. Quin ad aspectum magni illius divi Leonis, qui fuit unus ex antecessoribus vestris et vestrum exemplar, stetit Attila ipse venerabundus, et præsentem tanti præfulis annosâ gravitate, tota cecidit victoris ferocitas. Quid ergo nobis lugendum magis quàm quod de nostrâ Galliâ, quæ nuper Regem suum et Christianissimum et Ecclesiæ natu majorem appellare gloriabatur, eruperint homines, qui, per debacchantem impiæ philosophiæ dementiam, subito evaserint Gothis et Vandalis ipsis immanitate crudeliores? Qui fieri potuit ut homines longo religionis aut saltem innatæ cujusdam humanitatis usu informati, citiùs, quàm incultæ et hispidæ naturâ nationes, eum exuerint reverentiæ sensum, quem vi blandâ sibi attrahere videbatur venerabilis Pastor, in quo senilis Majestas, augusta Frons, dignitatis splendor, tot pacificæ dotes, constans et elata mens in adversis, virtutum denique omnium sacer comitatus cæleste quoddam et divinum spirabant?

Inde

by their eloquence and talents; others have been rendered eminent by their erudition, their sanctity, and the diversity of their virtues, which were peculiarly adapted to the times in which they lived. But, like a great prince, to have governed Rome with a just and lenient hand, to have ruled it by wise laws, to have secured its attachment by repeated acts of kindness, to have embellished it with ancient and modern monuments of the arts; like an excellent pastor, to support, comfort and govern the Church, at a most critical period, by the united influence of learning, of piety, of prudence, of an unshaken greatness of soul; this holy Father, is your peculiar praise, this adds the brightest glory to your pontificate.

With these reflections were we solacing our dejected minds, when the impious thunder, which hurled us from our Sees, appeared likely to fall on the head of our common Father. It glows, it bursts forth with redoubled violence, and in its course threatens destruction even to the Church, if the gates of hell were suffered to prevail against her.

When Italy in ages past was laid open to the ravages of barbarians, and Rome, the bulwark of the christian world, fell under their yoke, their wild and savage rage spared the sacred Pontiffs. Awed at the sight of the great St. Leo, one of your predecessors and your model, Attila himself respectfully halted; before the aged gravity of that illustrious prelate, the ferocity of the haughty conqueror died away. What therefore can be a greater subject of affliction to us, than that in our unhappy country, which boasted the honour of styling its sovereign, His Most Christian Majesty and Eldest Son of the Church, men should have arisen, who, hurried on in their mad career by the raging fury of an impious species of philosophy, should have proved more inhuman and cruel than Goths and Vandals. How is it possible, that men long trained to the practice of religion, or at least, formed to the habits of humanity, should have divested themselves with greater ease than wild and savage nations, of that impression of respect, which a venerable pastor, by his engaging appearance, seemed forcibly to attract; a pastor, in whom the majesty of age, the dignity of mien, the splendor of appearance, so many pacific qualities, a mind calm and exalted in adversity, the sacred assemblage of every virtue, indicated something heavenly and divine.

Hence

Inde luctus noster, inde mæror, inde cor nostrum anxie pavitans, et assidua ad Dominum deprecatio ut mittat Angelum suum bonum, qui te salvum facere, solari, comitari velit, ducere ac reducere.

Sub hac tantâ malorum congerie, nobis tamen, Beatissime Pater, superest aliquid, quod mirum in modum sublevat animos. In Catholicâ doctrinâ ratum quippe est et divinitus statutum Fidem Petri numquam defecturam esse, imò usque ad finem seculorum permanfuram. Sublimis illa summorum Pontificum sedes et columna veritatis procellosis impiornm hominum affectibus et sceleurum æstu poterit quidem interdum concuti, jactari, sed nunquam funditus avelli. Ubicumque terrarum fuerit Pontifex, qui canonicâ lege jus et sedem teneat illius, cui à Christo Domino dictum est : *tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam* : et rursus : *Rogavi pro te, ut non deficiat fides tua* : Ibi et erit idem centrum unitatis, quod assidue debeant cæteræ Ecclesiæ consulere, venerari, eique radicitus adhærere.

Alta sanè et incomprehensibilia sunt judicia Dei, at veritas ejus manet in æternum. Stabit ergo, Beatissime Pater, tua indefectibilis Cathedra ; et tu ex altissimo illo gradu, tot inter rerum humanarum vicissitudines, eris universo orbi spectaculum ingens, forma gregis, Apostolici vigoris norma, et cuilibet homini christiano fidei et constantiæ memorabile simul et efficax exemplum.

Hâc freti spe, hoc mentis affectu, tuis effusi genibus Apostolicam Benedictionem enixe rogamus,

Sanctitatis vestræ

Devotissimi et obsequentissimi filii.

Hence arise our grief and affliction ; hence our constant anxiety and assiduous prayer to the Almighty, that he would send his angels to preserve, to comfort, to accompany, to lead, to restore you.

Amidst this series of disasters, holy Father, there is one thing which considerably contributes to raise our drooping spirits. It is a point of the catholic doctrine, derived from a divine source, that the faith of Peter will never fail, and that it will remain to the end of ages. That sublime See of the sovereign Pontiffs, that pillar of truth, may sometimes be assailed, and even shaken by the furious passions of impious men, but it will never be compleatly overthrown. Wherever that Pontiff shall be, who shall fill the See, and exercise the rights of him, to whom this was said : *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church*, and again : *I have asked for thee, that thy faith may not fail*, there will be found the centre of unity, which other churches are perpetually to consult and venerate, and to which they are closely to adhere.

The Judgments of God, are truly profound and incomprehensible, but his truth remaineth for ever. Your indefectible chair, holy Father, will therefore stand ; and you, from your exalted situation, will be, amidst the vicissitudes of human transactions, a great spectacle to the admiring world, the model of your flock, the pattern of apostolic vigour, and a memorable and an efficacious example to all Christians of faith and of constancy.

Animated with this hope, impressed with these sentiments, we prostrate ourselves at your feet, and earnestly request your apostolic benediction.

Your HOLINESS'S

Most devoted and obedient Servants,

C

RESPONSIO
SUMMI PONTIFICIS PII SEXTI.

PIUS PAPA VI.

Venerabilibus Fratribus, &c.

VENERABILES Fratres, Salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem.

Constantiam Vestram in Ecclesie unitate tuenda, tantisque in laboribus ob Catholicam Fidem perferendis, et universus terrarum orbis suspexit, et nos, pro pastoralis Apostolatus nostri munere, non uno sed pluribus paternae sollicitudinis nostrae testimoniis semper confirmandam curavimus. Nullae siquidem litterae à vobis perverunt ad nos, quibus non ita semper responderi jusserimus, ut intelligeretis simul, et quo loco haberemus admirabilem virtutem vestram, et quanto dolore afficeremur ob gravissimas ærumnas, quibus jactabamini, et quam vehementer solari vos atque in virtute Domini nostri Jesu Christi comfortare atque erigere animos vestros studeremus. Quam significationem paternae caritatis, quâ vos ceterosque invictos Dei Confessores, venerabiles fratres nostros semper complexi sumus, si antea dedimus vobis, multo nunc magis ad consolandos et confirmandos animos vestros dandam censemus, cum videamus vos magnitudinem ac diuturnitatem ærumnarum vestrarum oblitos, tanto in mœnore metuque versari propter eas, quibus Deus, per summam misericordiam suam, ad salutem nostram operandam in nobis, dignos nos habuit. In quo tamen si de Ecclesie periculo in periculo nostro timetis, laudamus nos quidem sollicitudinem vestram; sed simul tribulationis vim, quâ pressi estis, agnoscimus, quæ facit ut, cum tot Dei promissis Ecclesiam nunquam defecturam, semperque in tribulationibus florentiorem fore sciatis, vacui tamen metu de illius periculo in discrimine nostro esse non possitis. Si
verò

THE
ANSWER OF THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF
PIUS VI.

PIUS VI. POPE,

To our venerable Brethren greeting and apostolic
Benediction.

YOUR constancy in defending the unity of the Church, and in enduring incessant labours for the Catholic faith, has been a subject of admiration to the whole world. We, conformably to the pastoral functions of our station, have always been careful to offer you encouragement and support by repeated testimonies of our pastoral solicitude. None of your letters have yet reached us, to which we have not ordered such an answer to be given, as testified the esteem in which we held your superior virtue, the deep sorrow which we felt in consequence of your sufferings, and our ardent desire of consoling you in the virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of invigorating your courage. If ever we have exhibited instances of that paternal affection which we have always felt for you, and the other confessors of God, our venerable brethren, we consider it peculiarly our duty at the present moment, to suggest motives of consolation, and to hold out inducements to christian fortitude. For we now see you, forgetting the greatness and duration of your own distresses, and indulging the greatest grief and apprehension in consequence of those sufferings, which it has pleased the Almighty in his infinite mercy to send us, for the purpose of securing our salvation. If, in our personal danger, you have any apprehensions for the Church, we cannot but applaud your solicitude; we acknowledge at the same time the violence of the evil by which we are surrounded. Indeed notwithstanding the promises of God, that the Church shall never fail, and that she shall shine with more lustre in the midst of tribulation, it may easily be conceived, that, in our present distress, you cannot be totally without apprehension concerning her lot. But if our personal misfortunes

verò quæ nos ipsi patimur sollicitos habent vos, propter eam ægritudinem, quâ animum nostrum in hoc exilio confecto arbitramini, grati nos quidem sumus caritati in nos vestræ; verumtamen vos cum Apostolo obsecramus, ne angustiemini in nobis, nec deficiatis in tribulationibus nostris; fieri enim non potest ut, quamvis tot adversa feramus, ullâ animi ægritudine conficiamur, scientes nullâ aliâ in re tantam gloriam inesse, quantam his in laboribus, quibus, Deo sic permittente, jactati sumus.

Neque verò cum gloriam dicimus, eam dicimus, quæ est illis promissa à Deo, qui ab hominibus ejecti, spoliati, exprobat, maledicti propter nomen Christi persecutionem patientur, qui, ne capillo quidem capitis perditio, copiosam mercedem in cælis possidebunt; neque illam, quam eos manere scitis, quorum vita nunc reputatur infamia et finis sine honore, qui tamen inter sanctos sortem habebunt, et inter filios Dei computabuntur; verum eam gloriam dicimus, quâ, hoc ipso tempore, cumulamur à Deo, dum tot his ærumnis ac contumeliis perferendis spectaculum mundo, Angelis et hominibus facti sumus pro Christo. Nam sive ad corripiendos et castigandos nos supra caput nostrum ita gravata sit manus Domini, quid hæc tribulatione gloriosius nobis? Qui, etsi justè pro peccatis nostris affligimur, per ea tamen quibus affligimur, et amari à Deo, et licet peccatores simus, tamen à patre misericordiarum amantissimo tanquam filios haberi cognoscimus, cum dicat Apostolus: *quem diligit Deus castigat; flagellat autem omnem filium quem recipit.* Sive per tentationem hanc, quâ sic exerceri permittit nos Deus, experiri velit fidem et perseverantiam nostram; quanta hæc item gloria nostra est! Cum per tentationem hanc etiam vel in nostrâ hanc indignitate sperare possimus non despectos, sed acceptos nos esse Deo, cum illud legimus: *sicut in igne probatur aurum, sic homines accepti in fornace tentationis:* neque

afford you any disquietude, from an impression that, in our exile, we are overwhelmed with affliction, we cannot but express our acknowledgments for the tenderness of your feelings; but we conjure you with the Apostle, not to indulge sorrow on our account, nor to lose courage in your sufferings. For whatever be the pressure of the ills, under which we labour, it is not possible that we should yield to dejection, when we know that nothing in life is attended with so much glory, as the sufferings with which we are assailed, by the permission of the Almighty.

When we speak of glory, we mean not that which is promised by God to those, who are banished, are despoiled, are loaded with infamy and malediction, and endure every species of persecution for the name of Christ; who, without losing a hair of their head, will obtain an ample reward in heaven; nor do we allude to that glory, which awaits those persons, whose life is now reputed madness, and whose end is deemed dishonourable, but who will receive their lot with the saints, and will be ranked among the children of God: but we speak of that glory, with which we are crowned, by the Lord at the present time, when, by enduring sufferings and outrages, we are become a spectacle to the world, to angels and men. For if the hand of the Lord hath smitten our head to correct or chastise us, what can be more glorious than such an affliction? We are indeed justly punished for our sins; still this chastisement, which we experience, furnishes a proof, that we are beloved by God, and, however sinful, are admitted to the number of his children. God, says the Apostle, *chastises him whom he loves; he scourges every son whom he receives.* If by this trial, which God has permitted, our faith and perseverance are put to the test, how much does such a circumstance redound to our glory! From this we may, however unworthy, entertain a well-grounded hope, that we are not rejected by God, but that we are acceptable to his Divine Majesty; for it is written: *as gold is tried in the fire, so are acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation:* this is not permitted, in order

neque id eo consilio ut in tentatione deficiamus, sed ut probatio nostræ fidei multò pretiosior auro, quod per ignem probatur, inveniatur.

Hæc cogitatione, Venerabiles Fratres, ita mirificè et consolatur et corroborat infirmitatem hanc nostram Deus, ut non eas solum, quas ferimus, sed multò etiam majores tribulationes perferre desideremus, dummodo et propter justitiam et propter Christum eas perferre debeamus, et tot hisce laboribus non ad animæ nostræ interitum, sed ad emendationem et probationem nostram, tanquam filii Deo non despecti exerceamur.

Quod si non peculiare nostrum tantummodo sed commune etiam Ecclesiæ bonum consideremus, deest ne nobis quod ad eas calamitates, non solum in omni patientiâ, verum etiam in gaudio et gratiarum actione sustinendas animos nostros erigamus? Non ii vos estis, Fratres Venerabiles, qui docendi à nobis sitis, quàm alienis atque adeò quàm abhorrentibus ab humanâ ratione consiliis ad demonstrandam omnipotentiz suæ vim, qui *infirmi mundi eligit ut confundat fortia*, Ecclesiam suam constituerit, eamque ad hanc, quam miramur, amplitudinem auxerit. Scitis sanè ut à cruce atque à suppliciis initia, à contumeliâ gloriam, ab errorum tenebris lucem, ab oppugnatione incrementa, à jacturis, ac cladibus stabilitatem eam voluerit habere, ut nunquam magis gloriosa ea fuerit, quàm cum minùs gloriosam eam efficere homines sunt conati; nunquam magis segura, quàm cum vehementioribus persecutionum procellis periculosius fuit ab inimicis suis agitata. Quam ob causam Noëmicæ illi arcæ à sanctis Patribus comparabatur, quæ eò securiùs super naufragantis orbis undas assurgebat, quò furentioribus imbrium ac ventorum viribus obrui demergique videbatur. Nostis etiam quemadmodum ea continenter per trecentos annos vexata, facultatum rapinas, contumelias, carcerem, catenas, exilia, cruces, flammæ, carnificinas perpeffa, Pontificum fermè omnium, Episcoporum ac Martyrum infinitorum sanguine cruentata, fide, patientia, mansuetudine suâ Tyrannorum crudelitatem delassaverit, superstitionem deleverit, et à mari usque ad mare crucis gloriam victrix propagaverit, eosdemque religionis fines ac orbis terrarum

der that they may yield to affliction, *but that their faith, thus tried, may be found more precious than the gold which passes through the fire.*

With this reflection, venerable Brethren, the Almighty so wonderfully consoles and strengthens our weakness, that we desire to endure not only our present tribulation, but far greater, if we may be permitted to suffer it for Christ and for the cause of justice, and undergo this painful trial, not to incur the loss of our soul, but for our amendment, like the children whom God does not reject.

If, besides the peculiar advantages, which we personally derive from adversity, we consider the general interest of the church, are we destitute of motives which lead us to support these calamities with patience, but with joy and thanksgiving? You have not now to learn from us, venerable Brethren, how opposite to the suggestions of human reason are the designs of him, *who chooses the weak things of the world that he may confound the strong*, and in what manner he displayed the force of his Almighty arm, in establishing his Church, and raising it to that degree of splendor, which excites our admiration. It was his pleasure, you know full well, that it should derive its beginning from the cross and from torments, its glory from shame, and its light from the darkness of error, its increase from opposition, its stability from losses, from disasters: you are convinced, that it was never more glorious, than when men united their efforts to diminish its glory; never more secure, than when its enemies raised against it the most violent storms of persecution. For this reason the Church is compared by the holy fathers to the Ark of Noah, which rode more securely on the waves, that covered the shipwrecked world, as it appeared more in danger of sinking under the violence of the wind, and the fury of the tempest. You know that the Church, after suffering the torments of persecutors for three hundred years, after enduring the loss of effects, outrages, prisons, chains, exile, crosses, fire, tortures, after being tinged with the blood of most of its Pontiffs, and an infinite number of bishops and other martyrs, exhausted at last the cruelty of its tyrants by faith, by patience, by perseverance, destroyed the empire of superstition, triumphantly extended from sea to sea the glory of the cross, and gave to religion no other boundaries but those of the world.

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terrarum fecerit. Fides Ecclesiæ, scribit sanctus Ambrosius, neque in gladio suo feras expulit Nationes, neque certamine bellico turmas fugavit hostiles, sed mansuetudine et fide terras inimicorum possedit. Fides enim sola pugnavit, idè triumphos meruit, quia persecutionibus non vincitur Ecclesia, sed augetur.

Quæ primis temporibus ad Ecclesiam auspicandam consequentibus subinde annis scitis accidisse. Nota omnibus sunt sacrilega illa contra Ecclesiam bella hæreticorum, notæ execrabiles imanitates, nota odia impetusque illi acerrimi, quibus ejus unitatem dissolvere, integritatem violare, majestatem minuere acerbissimi illi hostes conati sunt, à quibus profecto, si ullis hominum aut inferorum dolis ac viribus Ecclesia posset excindi, omnia exitia ei fuissent metuenda. At verò quantānam parte suorum ornamentorum nunc careret Ecclesia, si illa teterrima bella, illæ acerrimæ contentiones ad eam convellendam non extitissent? Cum etiam ferro, flammâ, vinctis, rapinis, præscriptionibus, suppliciis, cum in Catholicos universos, tum præcipuè contra Sacerdotium sævitum est, quid tum? Quid proficere contra Ecclesiam ejusque doctrinam acerbissimi hostes potuere? Quantum decus ex tot Confessorum constantiâ! Quanta lux ex tot Doctorum sapientiâ accessi Ecclesiæ! tanta nimirum quanta nunquam accessisset, nisi contentiones illæ ad eam obscurandam fuissent excitatæ. Pugnarunt contra Ecclesiam hæretici (verba nostis Sancti Augustini) et Ecclesiam quæstionibus agitaverunt; at aperta sunt quæ latebant, et intellecta est voluntas Dei. Multi, qui poterant Scripturas dignoscere et pertractare, latebant in populo, nec afferebant solutiones quæstionum difficilium, cum calumniator nullus instaret. Numquid de Trinitate perfectè tractatum est, antequam oblatrarent Ariani? Numquid de pænitiâ perfectè tractatum

—It is not by the sword, says St. Ambrose, that the Church has subdued savage nations; it is not in the fury of battle, that it has routed hostile squadrons; by meekness and by faith it has possessed the land of its enemies; faith alone engaged in the combat, and obtained the palm of victory; for persecution, far from overcoming the Church, adds to its increase and its splendor,

It has not escaped your observation, that the same means, which contributed to the foundation and propagation of the Church, have, in subsequent periods, considerably tended to the diffusion of its glory, and the extension of its spiritual empire. No one is unacquainted with the sacrilegious hostilities, in which heretics have been engaged against the Church; no one is ignorant of their savage and execrable efforts, of their persevering malice, and the unremitting violence by which they have attempted to dissolve its unity, to violate its integrity, and to degrade its majesty. Had it been possible for the power of earth or hell to destroy the Church, it might on these occasions have apprehended a total ruin. How many of its beautiful ornaments would never have existed had these dreadful wars, these desperate attacks never have been made for its destruction? When the sword, fire, chains, rapine, proscriptions, tortures, were employed against the body of Catholics, and particularly against the priests, what was the result? How far did the attempts of implacable enemies against the Church and its doctrines meet with success? What glory did she derive from the constancy of so many confessors! What an increase of light did she receive from the wisdom of her doctors! Light which never would have blazed, had not attempts been made to obscure it. Heretics have fought against the Church, says St. Austin, and have disturbed it by the discussion of various questions; but that which was latent, has been made manifest, and the will of God has been more generally understood. Many, who were able to understand and explain the oracles of God, remained concealed in the crowd; no solution of difficult questions was offered, as there was no false doctrine to refute. Was the doctrine of the Trinity perfectly discussed, before the blasphemies of the Arians were made

D

known?

tractatum est, antequam obfisterent Novatiani? Sic non perfectè de Baptismatè tractatum est, antequam contradicerent foris positi Rebaptisantes; nec de ipsâ unitate Christi enucleatè dicta erant quæ dicta sunt, nisi postquam separatio illa urgere cæpit fratres infirmos, ut jam illi qui noverant hæc tractare ac dissolvere, ne perirent infirmi sollicitati sermonibus et disputationibus impiorum, sermonibus et disputationibus obscura legis in publicum deducerent.

Quorsum, Venerabiles Fratres, hæc ad vos scribimus? Non certè ut doceamus vos, quorum cum constantiam et fidem, tum præcipue sapientiam singularem semper mirati sumus; sed ut rerum tam admirandarum recordatione cum vos, tum nosmetipsos consolemur, simulque ut, omni mœrore deposito, ex tot adversis, quæ patimur, ea nobis etiam bona polliceamur, quæ in Ecclesiam semper sunt ex adversis profecta; eaque tantò nobis ampliora atque uberiora polliceamur, quantò gravior acerbiorque tribulatio hæc est, quàm cæteræ ullæ fuerunt, à quibus novimus jactatam olim Ecclesiam fuisse ac perturbatam.

Quanquam verò quid de futuris Ecclesiæ bonis cogitamus, cum jam præsentibus perfruamur? Anne verò adeò parva aut pauca istæc bona sunt, ut eam jam egnoscere nequeamus? Profectò si nihil aliud ex hisce laboribus, quibus premimur, consecutam jam esse Ecclesiam videremus, nisi quod, in tanto rei Christianæ motu, evangelica illa (quæ tandiu ad ejus securitatem à bonis omnibus desiderabatur) zizaniorum à tritico, palearum à frumento facta sit segregatio, nisi quod manifesti facti sunt ii, qui, cum intrinsecus essent lupi rapaces, induti pellibus ovium in Ecclesiâ latebant, et quas insidias ei apèrte non poterant, eas occultè machinabantur, quorum malitia et fraus, nisi hæc ipsa mala accidissent, semper inter
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known? Had the question on penance been treated in a complete manner, when the Novatians commenced their heretical attack? In the same manner, the nature of baptism was not perfectly explained before the innovation of heretics, who reiterated that sacrament; so many noble things would never have been said on the subject of the unity of the Church, had not a separation raised inquietude in the minds of weak brethren. On such occasions, those who possessed abilities to treat these questions, and solve the objections of adversaries, threw the greatest light on the obscurity of the law both in their discourses and writings, in order to obstruct the fatal and incessant labours of impiety.

For what purpose, venerable Brethren, do we transmit to you these reflections? We cannot assuredly design to instruct you, whose faith, constancy and singular wisdom have frequently been the subject of our admiration. No. Our view is to refer to these wonderful transactions for our mutual consolation, to banish all anguish to which our sufferings might naturally give birth, and look to those advantages, which the Church has never failed to derive from adversity. We may rest assured, that the effects will be more ample and more abundant, as the present trial exceeds any, which has ever afflicted the Church of God.

But why should we confine our attention to future blessings, when present advantages are open to our view? Are these so few in number, so inconsiderable, as to escape our observation. Indeed if no other advantage had accrued to the Church, from the distress by which we are surrounded, but that of a long wished for separation of the tares from the wheat, of the straw from the corn, to make use of an evangelical illustration; if we gained one point only, that of seeing those unmasked, who under the mild and amiable appearance of sheep, were in reality ravenous wolves, and were preparing those stratagems in secrecy, which they were afraid openly to avow; whose malice and whose fraud, had not these calamities arisen, would have lurked from the face of day, to the dishonour of the Church, and the
most

nos ad sanctitatem Ecclesiæ sædandam, moresque bonorum depravandos, occultè latuissent; parva ne Ecclesiæ utilitas hæc esset putanda?

Quid verò illud quod ex funestissimis fructibus ejus, quibus ferme universus orbis interiit, cognitum est tandem aliquando, quod (nequicquam vobis et nobis clamantibus) adhuc ab hominibus cognosci noluit, quid velit, quò spectet, quid propositum habeat sibi perversa illa, quæ tam invalescit ac dominatur sapientia, cujus ex beneficiis omnes gentes erraverunt, quæ in nomen invadens philosophiæ, non se religionis virtutisque magistratam præbet, quod esset proprium Christianæ germanæque sapientiæ, sed omnis impietatis, licentiæ, cupiditatis, perfidiæ, libidinis artifex, omnium calamitatum, dolorum, exitiorum parens, ad humana ac divina quæque subvertenda sese excogitatam esse patefacit. Quam illa plagam ex hâc ipsâ nostrâ, atque adèo ex hâc orbis terrarum universi calamitate accepisse putanda est; cum ex iis tantis luctibus, quibus per eam genus humanum funestatum est, atque in dies gravius funestatur, exitiosa ejus consilia innotuerint, et crudeles machinationes sint intellectæ.

En cur illæ inter Ecclesiasticam et civilem potestatem tot excitatæ dissentiones, en cur in suspensionem apud potentes vocata Ecclesiæ auctoritas, opes in invidiam, libertas in captivitatem; nimirum ut Ecclesiæ præfidiis generi humano subtractis, impietatis trophæa in deflagratæ Religionis cineribus, si fieri posset, ad perditionem orbis terrarum universi constituerentur.

Quid quod, dum qui ex nostris non erant, omni simulatione depositâ non modo se à nobis segregaverunt, sed etiam characterem bestię in frontibus suis præferentes cum Agno pugnaverunt, bellumque acerbissimum contra Ecclesiam gesserunt; cæteri, quorum nomina scripta sunt in libro vitæ, ita ad omnem sanctitatem exarserunt, ut ne tunc quidem, cum temporibus pacatissimis uteretur Ecclesia, tam aperta in Christianis gregibus religio, tam firma fides, tam inflammata caritas fuerit unquam

most manifest danger of spreading corruption; if the detection of these persons were the only consequence of the present disasters, would it be an advantage of inconsiderable moment?

To these advantages we may add another of no less consequence. The bitter fruits, which have almost poisoned the universe, have now spread conviction of a truth, which before, notwithstanding our united remonstrances, mankind seemed unwilling to believe. No doubt is now entertained of the design, the object, the tendency of that detestable wisdom, which so generally prevails, and has seduced nations into error by its destructive principles; which, though it assumes the name of philosophy, trains not men to religion and virtue, an advantage which Christianity alone can bestow; but is the melancholy source of impiety, of licentiousness, of covetousness, of perfidy, of lust; the wretched parent of all calamities, of all sorrows, of all disasters, and manifestly arose for the complete destruction of every divine and human blessing. What a deep wound has this unnatural monster received, in consequence of our sufferings and the general calamities of the universe. The dismal sorrow, the funeral mourning, in which it has involved mankind, without intermission to the present hour, have brought to light its fatal projects, and exposed to the face of day its infernal machinations.

To what purpose was dissension sown between the civil and ecclesiastical power? Why was the authority of the Church rendered suspicious to the rulers of the world? why was its wealth exposed to envy, its liberty exchanged to servitude? This was plainly the intent, to wrest from mankind the support of religion; and by raising, if possible, the trophies of impiety on the smouldering ruins of its falling edifice, to involve the human race in one common ruin. In speaking of the advantages of this trial, we may remark, that those, who were not ours have set aside the mask of hypocrisy, have separated themselves from us, and bearing the character of the beast on their foreheads, have fought against the Lamb, and waged a cruel war with the Church. Others, whose names are written in the book of life, have been inflamed with such ardour for virtue and sanctity, that, at the most peaceful periods, such strong attachment to religion in the people, such firm faith, such ardent charity were never observed. It affords us the
most

quam perfecta. Quod cum de gregibus Galliæ universis, tum etiam de cæteris ac præcipuè de Romano nostro non sine magnâ animi jucunditate audimus; qui, ut S. Joannes Chrysostomus in primis illis temporibus meminit accidisse, etiam si pastoribus suis spoliati fuerint, tamen ob eam fidem, quâ se probaverunt Ecclesiæ, Deo in custodiam ipsorum vigilante, carere pastoribus suis nullo modo sunt visi. Versutus Diabolus atque ad fruendas aptus insidias existimabat, si pastores sustulisset, ovilia se faciliè direpturum; sed qui comprehendit astutos in eorum astutiâ, ostendens Ecclesias suas non ab hominibus gubernari, verùm eos, qui in ipsum credunt, semper à se regi, id fieri permittebat ut, cum cerneret rectoribus sublati non tamen Ecclesiam deleri, nec veritatis prædicationem extinguere, sed potius augeri, ex rebus ipsis et ipse et qui ei interviebant omnes intelligerent Christianam disciplinam non ab hominibus pendere, sed in cælis radices agere, Deumque esse qui Ecclesiam ubique tueretur.

His igitur tam præclaris bonis cum nos vel in ipso persecutionis æstu, tantâ enim Dei gloriâ ita auctam videamus Ecclesiam, de eâ quid sperandum erit cum, sedatis tempestatibus, tempus tranquillitatis et miserationis advenerit, cum perpurgata ventilabro Dei, tribulationis igne probata, tot admirandis vestris ac Venerabilium Fratrum nostrorum Cardinalium triumphis nobilitata, fide, constantiâ, sanctitate tot Episcoporum, tot sacrarum Virginum, tot Cænobitarum, tot denique Christianorum illustrata, Dei gloriam erit operatura? Præsertim cum exercitatione virtutis refrigerescens in mundo caritas Christianorum ita sit per tribulationem inflammata, philosophiæ pravitas ex perniciosis suis fructibus ita sit refutata, Religionis sanctitas ex admirandis suis virtutibus ita sit illustrata, probatorum fides hæreticorum contentione ita manifesta sit facta

Hæc

most exquisite pleasure, that the numerous body of faithful in France, and those of Rome have appeared in this trying scene, with the greatest advantage to their character. They have verified the remark of St. John Chrysostom on the primitive ages, that, when the faithful were deprived of their pastors, the Almighty rewarded their faith and their attachment to the Church, by so peculiar a providence, that they seemed never to feel their loss. The devil, ever crafty and skilful in laying snares for man, imagined that by removing the pastors, he should plunder the fold with ease ; but he, who takes the crafty in their own wiles, has shewn that his Church is not governed by men, but that he watches over those who believe in him. On this ground he has permitted the absence of the pastors, in order that the devil and his agents might be sensible, that such an event destroys not the Church, nor impedes the progress of truth ; and that they might be convinced, that the christian religion depends not on the efforts of men, but that its origin is divine, and that God himself is the protector of his Church.

If therefore in the heat of the persecution we find the Church adorned with so many noble advantages, what hopes may we not entertain, that, when the storm shall subside, and the days of tranquillity and mercy arrive, this Spouse of Christ, cleansed with the fan of God, tried by the fire of tribulation, resplendent with so many brilliant triumphs both of you and of our venerable brethren the Cardinals, distinguished by the sanctity of so many bishops, ecclesiastics, holy virgins, cenobites, and Christians of all descriptions, will greatly promote the honour of the Almighty. This hope is particularly well founded, when we consider that the charity of Christians, which becomes cold in the world, has been considerably inflamed in these trying scenes, that the pravity of the modern philosophy has been amply exposed by its pernicious effects, the sanctity of religion has derived splendor from its admirable virtues, and that the faith of the elect has been shewn in its combats with heresy.

Let

Hæc igitur miserationis ac pacis tempora, Venerabiles Fratres, in omni fide, spe et humilitate cordis nostri orantes sine intermissione apprecemur Ecclesiæ; et quamvis certissimum sit tantos eam efficere in tribulatione proventus, tantis que victoriis augeri, quantis augeri extra tribulationem nullo modo posset, tamen ne, dum ea fortium suorum triumphis lætatur, infirmorum cladibus atque exitio contristari debeat, qui, cum extra tribulationem positi, de futuris periculis nihil cogitantes, se contra diaboli aggressiones munire noluerint, ac mundo quàm Deo servire maluerint; in tentationis æstu licentiæ dominantis impetu abrepti, evanescentes in cogitationibus suis defecerunt à Deo, animasque suas projicientes Sathanæ se tradiderunt, rogemus misericordiarum Deum ut propter Christi filii sui sanguinem, qui pro omnibus effusus est, abbrevientur dies tentationis nostræ. Nam quamvis investigabilibus sapientiæ ac justitiæ Dei consiliis, quibus gloriam suam operatur, nobis omninò sit acquiescendum, tamen inter cætera omnia Ecclesiæ vulnera, hæc potissimum illa sunt, quæ diu noctuque excruciant nos, et sollicitum habent animum nostrum, ita ut acerbissima quæque pati, animam quæ ipsam nostram ponere parati essemus, si per sanguinem nostrum tot prævaricantium exitia avertere, tot infirmorum offensionibus jacturisque providere possemus.

Plura quidem essent, quæ ad confirmandos animos vestros, Venerabiles Fratres, vobis haberemus scribenda; sed præterquam quod modum Epistolæ excedere nolumus, ea est enim jam satis progressa, tanta est virtus vestra in hæc tribulatione perferendâ, ut non nostra à vobis, sed à nobis atque ab omnibus vestra fidei, constantiæ ac sanctitatis exempla sint petenda. Itaque finem faciemus cum sancto Joanne Chrysostomo, qui in simili causâ cum esset, et pari tribulatione pro Ecclesiâ premeretur, iis verbis fidem et constantiam præferentibus mærentem ac pavitantem gregem suum est consolatus: Multi fluctus urgent

Let us pray, venerable Brethren, without intermission, with faith, with confidence, with humility of heart, and beg that these times of mercy and peace may be given to the Church. She unquestionably flourishes most in the midst of tribulation, and gains such triumphs, as tranquillity would never ensure; yet while she celebrates the virtues of her generous combatants, apprehensions may be entertained, lest she may have to deplore the loss of weak brethren. Placed at a distance from tribulation, and regardless of future dangers, they have refused to fortify themselves against the attacks of Satan, and preferred the service of the world, to that of the Lord. Engaged in the hurry and danger of trial, and carried away by the violence of the passions, they have lost themselves in their thoughts, abandoned their God, and resigned their souls to the dominion of the devil. Let us therefore entreat the Father of lights, by the blood of his son Jesus Christ, which was shed for us all, that he would be pleased to shorten the days of our trial. The designs of wisdom and justice, by which the Almighty promotes his own glory, are unquestionably inscrutable, and demand our acquiescence. However, among all the wounds, which are inflicted on the Church, none afford us such ceaseless anxiety and solicitude, as that which we here deplore: we should ever be ready to endure the most cruel torments, and lay down our life, if our blood could avert the ruin of Apostates, or prevent the fall of weak brethren.

I might expatiate more on this subject, and suggest farther motives to excite constancy and fortitude. But I wish not to exceed the limits of a letter, and what I have said is sufficiently long. Besides, such is the degree of virtue, which you have shewn on this memorable occasion, that you have not to look to us for an example of heroism, but we and all the faithful are to consider you as perfect models of faith, sanctity and firmness. I shall therefore conclude with a passage from St. John Chrysostom, who, engaged in a similar cause, and suffering persecution for the Church, addressed to his timid and dejected flock, the following words so expressive of constancy and faith. “ Many are the

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“ storms

urgent nos gravesque procellæ, sed non timemus ne submergamur, nam in petrâ consistimus. Sæviat mare, petram dissolvere nequit: Insurgant fluctus, Jesu navigium demergere non possunt. Quid, quæso, timeamus? Mortemne? *Mihi vivere Christus est, et mori lucrum.* An exilium, dic mihi? *Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus.* An facultatum publicationes? *Nihil intulimus in hunc mundum, certumque est nos nihil hinc efferre posse:* terribilia quæque hujus mundi mihi despectui sunt, et bona risu digna. Non paupertatem timeo, non divitias concupisco, non mortem metuo, non vivere opto nisi ad profectum vestrum. Idèd præsentia commemoro, rogoque caritatem vestram ut fiduciam habeat. Nullus quippè nos separare poterit: *quod Deus conjunxit homo non separet.* Si nuptias non potes dirimere, quantò minùs Ecclesiam Dei potes dissolvere? Sed eam oppugnas, cum nihil possit lædere eum quem impetis, verum me reddes splendidior, tuamque vim mecum pugnando dejicies. Durum namque tibi est contra stimulum acutum calcitrare; non obtundes stimulos, imò sanguine pedes inficies; quandoquidem fluctus non petram dissolvunt, sed ipsi in spumam dissolvuntur. Nihil Ecclesiâ potentius, o homo; bellum solve, ne robur dissolvas tuum. Ne inferas cælo bellum. Si homini bellum inferas, aut vinces, aut superaberis; si Ecclesiam oppugnas vincere nequis, omnibus quippe fortior est Deus. *An amulamur Dominum?* An fortiores illo sumus? Deus fixit et firmavit, quis concutere tentaverit? Non nosti virtutem ejus, respicit terram et facit eam tremere: imperat, et quæ concutiebantur firma consistunt. Si concussum orbem firmavit, multò magis Ecclesiam firmare poterit. Ecclesia est ipso cælo fortior. *Cælum et terra transibunt, Quæ verba!* *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam, et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam.*
Quod

" storms, which are ready to burst over our heads; but
 " we are not afraid of sinking, for we stand on a rock.
 " Let the sea rage, it cannot dash the rock in pieces;
 " let the waves arise, they cannot sink the vessel of Je-
 " sus. Tell me what can I fear? Is it death? *To me to*
 " *live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Say, is it exile? *The*
 " *earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.* Is it the con-
 " fiscation of my effects? We brought nothing with us
 " into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing
 " hence. The terrible objects of human life are deserv-
 " ing of contempt, its goods excite a smile. I fear not
 " poverty, I covet not riches; I dread not death, I wish
 " not to live, but for your improvement. I now speak
 " to you of the actual situation of affairs; and I conjure
 " you to assume confidence. No one will be able ever
 " to disunite us; *what God has joined let not man separate.*
 " If thou art unable, O man, to dissolve marriage, how
 " dost thou attempt to undermine the Church! Thy
 " attacks are directed against it, but he whom thou hast
 " the audacity to assail, can receive no harm. Thou
 " wilt only add to my glory, and exhaust thy own
 " strength in the combat. It is hard for thee to kick
 " against the goad; thou wilt not blunt its edge, but
 " imbrue thy feet with blood. The waves dash not the
 " rock in pieces, they fall away into foam. Nothing,
 " O man, is more powerful than the Church; cease to
 " wage an impious war, that thy strength may not be
 " totally debilitated. Declare not war against heaven. If
 " thou art engaged in hostilities with a fellow-creature,
 " victory or defeat is the natural consequence; but
 " should the Church be thy enemy, there is no possibi-
 " lity of conquering: for God is stronger than all. *Do*
 " *we emulate the Lord?* Are we stronger than him? Who
 " will overturn what God has established and raised?
 " Know you not his might? *He looks at the earth, and it*
 " *trembles;* he commands, and what was tottering on
 " its foundation, remains unshaken. If he supports the
 " agitated globe, how much more will he strengthen his
 " Church? The Church is stronger than heaven. *Hea-*
 " *ven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass.*
 " What words? *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will*
 " *build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail*
 " *against her.*"

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Quod de novis pietatis testimoniis scripistis, Venerabiles Fratres, quibus Clementissimus Angliæ Rex ornare vos pergit, gratissimum nobis est: qui per eas litteras, quas ad singulos vestros dari iussit, significavit vobis se eâ lege, quâ peregrini omnes ex Angliâ exire iussi sunt, exemptos vos velle. Quod testimonium honorificentissimum ab Humanissimo Rege tributum fidei ac sanctitati vestræ, si vobis, qui accepistis, tam gloriosum est; quantò illi magis à quo vobis est datum? Quo etiam vehementiùs lætati sumus. Cui Regi quidem cum pro maximis beneficiis, quæ in vos contulit, eam gratiam, quam habemus, referre nullo modo possumus; Deum remuneratorem rogamus, ut ipse pro suâ largitate referat. Quod si impetramus, nihil erit ampliùs, quod ad summam Principis Clementissimi ejusque regni universi felicitatem à nobis vobisque optari possit.

Valete, Venerabiles Fratres, et clarissimis exemplis virtutis vestræ unà cum cæteris fratribus dispersis et in tribulatione positis Ecclesiam Dei ornare pergit: ad quos etiam si has litteras nostras miseritis, gratissimum nobis erit. Eo enim animo scripsimus, ut per eas non vos solum, sed illos etiam confortare et consolari desideremus. Omnes enim in sinu gerimus, omnibusque pacem et gaudium à Domino nostro Jesu Christo apprecamur, et Apostolicam Benedictionem pignus paternæ caritatis nostræ amantissimè impertimur.

Dat. ex Cænob. Cart. propè Florent. 10 Novemb. MDCCXCVIII,

Pontificatus nostri anno vigesimo quarto.

(Sig.) PIUS qui Suprà.

JOSEPHUS MAROTTUS, S. S. D.

Ab Epistolis Latinis.

FINIS.

The information you gave us, relative to the fresh marks of benevolence, with which the most clement King of England ceases not to honour you, afforded us the most heartfelt satisfaction. We are peculiarly gratified with the letter, which he addressed to each of you, allowing an exemption from the operation of the law that had been framed against foreigners in his dominions. If this honourable testimony, which the most humane of sovereigns designed as a tribute to your faith and constancy, reflects lustre on you who have received it, how glorious is it to him by whom it has been conferred! It indeed afforded us inexpressible delight. Unable as we are to satisfy our feelings of gratitude, in making a due return to that excellent Monarch for the favours which he has bestowed upon you, we earnestly entreat the Almighty to reward him in the most munificent manner. Should our prayers be heard, there is nothing farther, which we or you can wish to complete the felicity of that most clement Sovereign and his empire.

Farewell, venerable Brethren, and continue, together with our brethren in tribulation, to adorn the Church with the brightest examples of virtue. It will give us the greatest satisfaction to hear, that this letter has been communicated to them. We wrote for the purpose of suggesting motives of consolation both to them and you. We bear you all in our bosom, we entreat our Lord Jesus Christ to graht you all peace and joy, and with all the affection of our heart, we give you all our Apostolical Benediction, as the pledge of our paternal love.

Given at the Convent of the Carthusians near Florence, on the 10th Nov. 1798, and the 24th year of our Pontificate.

(Signed)

PIUS.

JOSEPH MAROTTI,
Latin Secretary to his Holiness.

THE END.

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